DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 091 758 CS 201 363

TITLE	Assessing Compositions: A Discussion Pamphlet.
INSTITUTION	London Association for the Teaching of English (England).
PUB DATE	65
NOTE	56p.; Published by Blackie & Son Ltd., 5 Fitzhardinge St., Portman Square, London W. 1, England; See related documents CS 201 320-375
AVAILABLE FROM	National Council of Teachers of English, 1111 Kenyon Rd., Urbana, Ill. 61801 (Stock No. 22102, $1.25 nonmember, $1.15 member)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC Not Available from EDRS. PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Composition (Literary); Comprehension; *Educational Research; Essays; High School Students; *Imagination; Language Arts; *Measurement Instruments; Organization; Research Tools; Resource Materials; Rhetoric; Syntax; Written Language
IDENTIFIERS	*The Research Instruments Project; TRIP

ABSTRACT

Designed to provide a scale for assessing the quality of personal or imaginative writing, the Evaluation Scale for Personal Writing (ESPW) consists of a group of twenty-eight imaginative essays written by British fifteen year olds. These essays have been arranged in order of quality by an eight member sub-committee of the London Association for the Teaching of English and are grouped into five grades. The main criteria for judging the essays were realization, comprehension, organization, density of information, and control of written language. Scale validity resides in the claimed expertness of the eight judges, the criteria of judgment derived from study of imaginative writing by fifteen year olds, and the actual complete pieces composing the scale. [This document is one of those reviewed in The Research Instruments Project (TRIP) monograph "Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts" to be published by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English in cooperation with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills. A TRIP review which precedes the document lists its category (Writing), title, author, date, and age range (senior high), and describes the instrument's purpose and physical characteristics.] (JM)

NCTE Committee on Research

The Research Instruments Project (TRIP)

ED 091758

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

The attached document contains one of the measures reviewed in the TRIP committee monograph titled:

Measures for Research and Evaluation in the English Language Arts

TRIP is an acronym which signifies an effort to abstract and make readily available measures for research and evaluation in the English language arts. These measures relate to language development, listening, literature, reading, standard English as a second language or dialect, teacher competencies, or writing. In order to make these instruments more readily available, the ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills has supported the TRIP committee sponsored by the Committee on Research of the National Council of Teachers of English and has processed the material into the ERIC system. The ERIC Clearinghouse accession numbers that encompass most of these documents are CS 201320-CS 201375.

TRIP Committee:

W.T. Fagan, Chairman
University of Alberta, Edmonton

Charles R. Cooper
State University of New York
at Buffalo

Julie M. Jensen
The University of Texas at Austin

Bernard O'Donnell
Director, ERIC/RCS

Roy C. O'Donnell
The University of Georgia
Liaison to NCTE Committee
on Research

CS 201 363

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH
1111 KENYON ROAD
URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801

Category: Writing

Title: Evaluation Scale for Personal Writing

Authors: Sub-Committee on Assessing Compositions of the London Association for the Teaching of English.

Age Range: Senior High

Description of Instrument:

Purpose: To provide a scale for assessing the quality of personal or imaginative writing.

Date of Construction: 1965

Physical Description: The ESPW is a group of twenty-eight imaginative essays written by British fifteen-year-olds. The essays have been arranged in order of quality by the eight members--English teachers and English educators--of a sub-committee of the London Association for the Teaching of English. The essays are also grouped into five "grades"--A to E, which could correspond to our A-F. Each of the twenty-eight esssys is discussed briefly in order to explain its placement in the scale.

Such a scale is used as a measuring instrument by matching other essays to particular ones along the scale, thereby obtaining a rank ordering or a scoring for the other essays.

The main criteria for judging the essays were the following:

Realization: the extent to which the writing directly reflects the writer's own experience (sincerety, spontaneity, vividness)

Comprehension: the extent to which a piece of writing shows an awareness of audience and can thereby be understood, permitting some consensus of response.

Organization: the extent to which a piece of writing has shape or coherence.

Density of Information: the amount of unique and significant detail.

Control of written language: extent of control over the specials forms and patterns of written syntax and rhetoric.

These criteria for imaginative writing may be compared to the criteria for expository writing in the Diederich analytic scale reviewed on p. 00 in this monograph.

Validity, Reliability, and Normative Data:

The validity of the scale resides in the claimed expertness of the judges who rank-ordered the twenty-eight essays, in the criteria of judgment derived from the study of the large amount of imaginative writing by fifteen-year-olds, and in the fact that the scale is composed of actual complete pieces of writing. No reliability data are reported for consistency of judgments by raters using the scale. Normative data are not reported.

Ordering Information:

EDRS

Related Documents:

Assessing Compositions: A Discussion Pamphlet. London: Blackie, 1965.

ASSESSING COMPOSITIONS

A Discussion Pamphlet

LONDON ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

CS 201 363

BLACKIE

ASSESSING COMPOSITIONS

A Discussion Pamphlet

prepared by

a sub-committee of the

LONDON ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

BLACKIE & SON LIMITED
5 FITZHARDINGE STREET
PORTMAN SQUARE
LONDON · W.1

BISHOPBRIGGS, GLASGOW

BLACKIE & SON
(INDIA) LIMITED
103-5 FORT STREET
BOMBAY

©
LONDON ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH
1965

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL BY MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
London Assn. for the Teaching of English
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER

First published 1965
Reprinted 1966, 1967

Printed in Great Britain
by Robert Cunningham and Sons Ltd., Longbank Works, Alva, Scotland

LONDON ASSOCIATION FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Members of the Sub-Committee

Miss N. C. Martin . . University of London Institute of Education (*Chairman*)

Mr. C. Beaks . . . . . Lascelles Secondary School, Harrow

Miss M. Blaker . . . . . Barnsbury Secondary School for Girls

Miss P. Creek . . . . . Tottenham County Grammar School

Mr. J. Kerry . . . . . Kilburn Grammar School

Mr. R. H. Poole . . . Tollington Park Comprehensive School

Mrs. P. Smyth . . . . . Plashet County Secondary School for Girls

Miss M. Tucker . . . . Norwood Secondary School for Girls

CONTENTS

		Page
1.	Introduction	7
2.	The Compositions	19
3.	The Gradings and Comments	47
4.	Book References	56

INTRODUCTION

In this pamphlet we present twenty-eight compositions written by fifteen-year-old pupils in London Secondary Schools arranged in order of merit from the most inadequate to the best. These are followed by a commentary which explains the order. The graded compositions and the comments form the body of our work, but it is preceded by a brief description of what we did, and a summary of the difficulties we found in grading imaginative composition.

We hope that this will provide a discussion document for those who have to establish standards for imaginative compositions in the C.S.E. examinations, but we think it has wider implications and will be of interest to all teachers who have to assess this kind of work. The mark one gives a composition depends upon a personal response to it, and is therefore liable to be different from someone else's mark. Such individual variation is an appropriate response to imaginative writing and it is not therefore expected that readers will necessarily agree with all our gradings or our comments, but we thought there was something to be learned from an examination of how our judgments had been arrived at, so we attempted to formulate our responses and the reasons behind them. We did this not only to reach agreement about the order of the compositions, but also to throw light on the criteria which had directed our judgments in the first place. In order to set these in a wider framework we prepared the 'Aspects of writing' section of the Introduction, which represents some contemporary ideas about language. Although no direct reference is made in the text to any particular books, we have included a short list of those authors whose ideas we have drawn on most fully so that readers who are interested can pursue these ideas.

We should like to stress that we are dealing with *assessing* and not *teaching* composition. We do not think that anyone can instruct children in how to 'realize' their experiences in words, how to shape them, how to 'choose' words or to use varied sentence structures before they write their compositions. Indeed, even markers should

not approach a composition armed with stylistic criteria: they should set out to be as receptive as they can, to be 'good listeners'. But if we want to compare impression marks, we have only the words on the page to analyse, and stylistic points will be some of the indicators.

Our Methods of Work

The initial aim of the study group was twofold.

We first wished to find a way of obtaining a child's best writing. We think that the subjects, the mode of setting them, and the conditions in which children write their examinations—and sometimes their homework—often tend to produce low level writing from children who could do better. Writing, like talk, arises from some context, such as conversation, reading, or real events, and may well need to be related to some such context to be effective. We therefore experimented with starting children writing by means of films, talk, looking at objects or pictures, reading a passage, etc. We found that most of the pupils wrote better than they did when they had to start from a subject in cold print. For this same reason many teachers are interested in the possibility of presenting course work for assessment in the examination as an alternative to the essay. A report on setting compositions was circulated at the N.A.T.E. conference at Easter 1964, but more work needs to be done before a report might be published. We hope that another of our discussion pamphlets will deal with this subject.

In the second place we wished to get away from the kind of assessment of writing that has operated at G.C.E. 'O' level, and start afresh by looking at samples of the writing drawn from the full ability range of fifteen-year-old pupils in an attempt to find standards of judgment that might be applied to all levels of language ability. We do not think that the suggestion that 40 per cent of pupils below the G.C.E. level might take the C.S.E. necessarily has any validity in terms of linguistic development. Furthermore, the demand for a pass in English is likely to be very extensive, so that the problem of what is an adequate standard of attainment in this kind of writing is an immediate one. We decided that the best way to solve this problem was to make our assessments by comparing the written work of pupils at all levels, and to find ways of describing their differences which were not bound by our current ideas of what constitutes a

pass in G.C.E. We have therefore, made a continuum of pupils' writing, starting with the least satisfactory right at the bottom of the comprehensive school and working upwards to what we regard as outstanding work in its own right. This constitutes a kind of scale, and readers will be able to draw their line of adequacy where they think it ought to go. We should, however, like to stress that one sample of a pupil's work is not enough on which to assess his level of attainment, and while our continuum should be useful in indicating the range of writing, any examination should include more than one piece by each candidate.

Our examples of writing were drawn from the work of pupils in seven or eight schools and were put in order of merit according to our individual judgments. This was done without any previous discussion of criteria, although our final order was only arrived at after much talk about the relative merits of the pieces. In order to give some basis for comparison we set the subject 'Alone' throughout the fourth year and later filled in gaps in our groupings with other pieces. Our final selection consists of five grades containing five to seven pieces of writing of what we judge to be an equivalent standard, except for the last two, which we consider outstanding.

When we discussed our individual assessments of the compositions, we talked first of whether the writer had something to say and was imaginatively involved in his writing, and whether his command of language allowed him to communicate adequately with the reader. When we examined the compositions in detail to try to discover the cause of our impressions, we found that we were, again and again, asking these questions:

(*a*) Does the experience seem real? Is there diversity of information in the detail, and is it relevant to the experience? Do the details show that the writer is recreating an experience as he writes or are they clichés?

(*b*) Has something been made of the experience so that it has significance for writer and reader? Is the work structured? There may be a simple change of pace. There may be a sense of coming to the point in the narrative for which all before has prepared, and on which all that follows reflects.

(*c*) Is the vocabulary precise, and where necessary rich in associations? Is there sufficient variety and complexity of sentence

structure to permit more complexity of subject, deeper understanding? Is the language being used in a personally creative way, or does one word so determine the next that there are only clichés of thought, feeling and language?

(*d*) Is there adequate control of spelling and punctuation so that the child manages to communicate, and manages to do so without irritating the reader too much?

We then summarized our judgments in the comments which follow the essays, but in order to illustrate the process of discovering and formulating the criteria by which we had graded the writing we have included one full assessment of an essay from each grade. These are marked with an asterisk.

Difficulties in Assessing Imaginative Composition

A very strong case can be made against the grading of imaginative compositions written by children as part of the normal school English course: a mark given, for example, to a description of a deeply felt personal experience seems impertinent. Yet, if we are to have an 'English' examination, it must include imaginative composition, as otherwise it would not be a test of what we teach as 'English'. Evaluation must depend on the total impression made by the composition, the success with which it communicates something felt to be of importance to the writer, for if too much stress is laid on the more easily assessed technical accuracy (which can also be tested in other parts of the examination paper), we are again not testing properly an important element in 'English'.

A recurring problem in assessing work is how to regard derivative writing. Many adults find those compositions most satisfying which deal with a pupil's real experience, either directly or in story form (e.g. No. 26 by Jonathan), but we must expect also to find compositions in which the writer has attempted to enter imaginatively into the experience of others: here he will often depend on his reading as well as on observation, and this reading experience will not have been tested against real experience. Although the adult reader, even here, will look for common human feeling to inform a good composition (as it does in No. 25 by Pamela) he must be prepared to make allowances for the writer's immaturity. In this kind of narrative

composition one often finds imitative writing and wish-fulfilments. Neither of these is in itself bad: imitation is the natural way of learning to use language, and in narrative wish-fulfilment frequently provides a satisfying pattern. Young writers use the tongues and eyes of their favourite authors, and this is neither a good nor a bad thing; it is the mode by which they learn. Imitation (conscious or unconscious) of a good writer will extend a pupil's vision and raise the level of his language control, whereas the imitation of poor writing, especially when it embodies obvious wish-fulfilments, will not direct the young writer's attention to anything new, and his own writing is likely to be less than his best. In writing of this kind he is only looking for the same satisfaction found in reading, so there is no progression, only repetition. The mark of this kind is a too facile coherence—word follows word, cliché follows cliché, situation follows situation without any of the tension which exists when one attempts to describe a unique situation with words which are by nature common. There is also another kind of imitation which occurs when a pupil has been taught an essay 'structure', a formula which can be applied to any subject: the result, as one can see in Moira's composition (No. 22) is a coherence that is only superficial, and underlying it a real lack of control of subject matter.

Another difficulty is the barrier to communication set up by the disparity between the experience of the writer and the reader. For example, a composition describing a boy or girl's real experience may please one assessor because of the novelty of the subject matter for him, whereas for another the unfamiliarity of the setting or unacceptable attitudes expressed in it may cause rejection. (No. 20, by Delrose, or 23, by John, may be such.) A composition attempting to explore adult experience, based on reading which has not been tested against real experience, may be condemned for lack of truth to life by one assessor; another may value it for its attempt to be adult. The assessor tends to develop certain expectations about the nature of 'good' and 'bad' essays. Those which conform to his ideas he will 'mark' easily and accurately, but he will find it difficult to read an essay which does not conform to his expectations because he will need to reorganize his ideas; and he may reject it without making sufficient effort.

And then there is spelling and punctuation. They inevitably affect

assessment. By their means the language of the composition is transmitted to the reader. They may cause a serious barrier in communication, and even minor faults can distract the reader from the subject matter. They are distinct from content. A composition can be coherent and yet badly spelt and punctuated (e.g., Howard's piece, No. 1). In practice, because such faults are closely associated with lack of experience of the written language—i.e., reading—they are most frequent in weak compositions.

For Consideration: Five Aspects of Writing

1. *Realization.* 2. *Comprehension.* 3. *Organization.* 4. *Density of information.* 5. *Relation of the spoken to the written language.*

Realization

A piece of imaginative writing is a symbolic representation. It represents an interaction between the writer's past experience and present attitudes, and some aspect of the real world. This representation is not a mirror-image; it is, in both senses, a personal reflection. The relationship between language and experience on the one hand, and language and thought on the other is a complex one. Words condition what we perceive, and we tend only to pay attention to those things that we have words for; at the same time, words never exactly match up to our experiences, so we use the nearest approximations. Thus they both reflect and reveal our experiences, and also, in some measure, falsify them. The extent to which a piece of writing directly reflects the writer's own experience is almost certainly behind those judgments expressed by the terms 'sincere', 'spontaneous', 'vivid', etc.

Comprehension

Although language is a social phenomenon, there are no absolute meanings of words. Words mean for each user the sum total of his previous experience of the things the words refer to; and this meaning is different for each individual because his experience is different. Thus a reader's response to something written does not exactly correspond to the meaning the writer finds in his words, nor is the reader's response quite the same as that of another reader. It comes nearest to the writer's meaning where there is community of interest

and knowledge, or where width of experience gives the reader imaginative understanding. Thus individual differences in actual and linguistic experience account for much of what is referred to as 'failure to understand'. They also mean that there can never be an objectively 'right' assessment of a piece of writing; only concensus of response.

Organization

In writing, the 'shaping' process would seem to take place below the level of conscious thought. The basic shape and direction of personal and imaginative writing seems to be the result of the writer's current preoccupations. This determines the selection and general organization of what he writes. This is why previous planning into headings so seldom matches up to what is written. At another level, the use of particular words and structures calls up other words and structures which are generally used in the same context, so that the piece, in a very real sense, does write itself. Conscious thought, direction and planning would seem to operate at the secondary stage of revision rather than initially. This, of course, often takes place while writing, when what is being made articulate fails to satisfy, but the direction and organization is there before the revision process begins to operate. When a piece of writing lacks this central direction we say it lacks 'shape', or 'coherence'. An analysis of the relevance of the items in a piece of writing to its central theme will reveal the degree of coherence of the piece as a whole (e.g. Jonathan, No. 26, or Pamela, No. 25, or Moira, No. 22).

Density of 'information' (detail)

Some sentences contain more information than others; consider the following:

(*a*) I saw a plant.
(*b*) I saw a delphinium.
(*c*) I saw a tall plant with a blue, spike-shaped head.

'Plant' is a general term: although it excludes animals and in animate objects, a host of possibilities are left. There are two ways in which we can be more specific. First we can choose from a system of words which contains many specific terms: 'delphinium' comes

from such a system. Secondly we can use a number of general terms so ordered in structure that the range of possibilities becomes less. 'I saw a tall plant with a blue, spike-shaped head' is an example of this. The writer chooses his words and relates them by choosing syntactical structures; and both choices, by excluding possibilities, give information. But similarly the selection of units longer than word or sentence, such as the incident in narrative, the ordering of these, and even the choice of literary form, all contribute to the meaning of the whole. The importance, to communication in writing, of units above the sentence in the linguistic hierarchy may be shown from the examples already used. 'Delphinium', by itself fails to communicate. 'I saw a tall plant with a blue, spike-shaped head', although there is organization of experience within the expression, would by itself evoke only the response 'So what?'; but, as part of a larger unit—a form in which a reader is accustomed to accept information—it could communicate. It is interesting to realize that 'A crimson berry, splattering down on the frost-white garden' has a much better chance of communicating when the reader knows that it is not a scrap, but is a recognized literary form (a Japanese poem).

One cannot set up density of information by itself as a standard by which one assesses a piece of writing. In language there is a great deal of necessary redundancy: this is clear when one considers how much a communication can be reduced in a telegram. If there were no redundancy in a piece of writing—if there were nothing to throw away, as it were—its information would be so dense that it would be too exhausting to read, and would be rejected.

Language is the most important means of organizing and reorganizing experience: things, qualities, events and ideas are sorted into categories and related. This organization goes on at every level—the word unit, the syntactical unit, the paragraph unit, the form of the whole composition. We act more effectively and we feel more at ease, more satisfied, when our previous experience has been organized. Reading may cause us to reorganize our experience, and it may confirm the lines of organization already laid down. The more reorganization it involves, the more difficult the reading will tend to be: the more confirmation there is, the easier it will be. We value a piece of writing for its organization of experience; and we have

called this organization 'coherence'. But it must be related to density of information because imaginative writing is concerned with what is unique and not with what is common, and realization of personal experience in words is shadowy without the use of significant detail. Such a series of comments on an afternoon excursion as 'Oh, it was nice—it was all very nice. I *did* enjoy it. We had a really good time' is a coherent and adequate communication in some circumstances, but in a written composition we expect a coherence which involves a greater density of information at all levels.

Relation of the spoken to the written language

The speech and writing of young children often has a striking freshness and individuality. This is not conscious artistry, but a lack of familiarity with established patterns of language use. As children grow older patterns of usage establish themselves, and if children's linguistic experience is a limited one, their linguistic output is confined to the nearest approximations drawn from what is to hand—i.e., local speech and popular reading. If their linguistic experience includes literature, talk with articulate adults, varied television programmes and a wide range of activities, they will have far greater linguistic resources to draw on and their writing will be more individuated. It will have a wider range of structures and a wider vocabulary richer in associations because their linguistic experience is wider. But there are considerable differences between the spoken and the written language. The written language has to convey by its structures, word order and vocabulary all that, in speech, is conveyed by intonation, emphasis, pauses, tempo, gesture and facial expression. A sense of the demands of the written language seems to come mainly from reading, but it comes patchily, and may be observed at various ages—in the junior school with some children, at about thirteen with many, in their last year at school with others, and not at all with some. A considerable number may be adequate, in fact, in their command of the spoken language, but never learn to use the written forms. Examples 1, 2 and 3 by Howard, Arthur and Kenneth illustrate this fact. They are all coherent, but the writers cannot use the written language either in its structures or in its orthography. On the other hand No. 4, by Wendy, reveals a primitive sense of the written language and it shows some knowledge of

typographical forms, but it has little central direction and organization, and little variety of experience is reflected in it.

The Process of Assessment

We believe that the process of assessment is in the first place a subjective response to the meaning of the composition, but as we read it we sharpen our focus and become aware of significant features of the language, such as its vocabulary, which provides its detail or incident, its grammar, which indicates its ordering of material, and its whole shape, which expresses the writer's intention. This heightened attention to linguistic (and typographical) features can assist us in estimating a child's level of language attainment, but it can also narrow to a microscopic view which causes us to lose momentarily the general meaning of the essay. These two directions in assessment account for some of the disagreements that always occur in the grading of imaginative compositions.

We believe that both views were operating in different degree in our individual responses to the essays, and that part of the process of good assessment is to be aware of these divergent sources of judgment and to attempt to assess their relative importance in each case. We would stress that although our assessments *took account* of certain linguistic features, this was generally part of our response to the essay as a whole, and this kind of assessment is basically an intuitive matter involving some kind of aesthetic response; that is, it is a literary judgment.

THE COMPOSITIONS

1

Saying Goodbye

Only an hour to ago befor I leves to cattes the train which will take me to portmorth with a thurnded other fellows, Going to the same place. for all your nown they mike be on the sane boat. I wounder whats its like in the R.N. Mike be good, seeing atlacing all day. And new port each week. half an hour to before the train. I wonder what mums thinkin I pett his evy her eyes out right now. Shes all. right, she won be seeing men lie every day and night. she got dads pensiver and the ransen bock. fifteen mins heft peter get redy for the startion's Come on mum where's dad, 'In the car'. 'right.' We araidy at the the startions the train just aggraidy. every kissing their muns dads wives childs good bye. Well good-bye mums goodbye I write to you ever: day and I see you every time I am, on leve. Bye mun, bye dad bye they must be take it bad. her only son going to war for the first time. Bye.

(E) HOWARD

2

Camping

One day I get up very early in the morning I wake my mum and dad and I said come on the time is 90 clock and wan my get up I said I will cook the Breakfast this morning and then I will make the bad's and I will go shopping with you, than my mum said to my what are you doing this for my than I said mum I am doing this for yiu because I want to go camping torrow and I am doing this for you I will asked you dad sad So my mum asked my dad and my dad said No you can not go, So I run upstairs, and paacked my staff and I said to my self I am going to run away and I will go with my friend That day went very fast and. It was mid night and I get out of my bed and put my cloths on and coppet doewn the stair and get my bicyle out and my gear and unlock The frent down and Than I went and than I went down my friend'Shouse than I went around the back door and an lock the door but the door wounld not un lock so I saw

a wonder around for ten minte's than I saw a window open And I get into the Bath room and into the Kicken than I went up stairs and went into my friend room My friend name was ozkan and he had two mor brother They name was Benerthe and John I wake them and ozkan said want are you doing he I ran away from home my dad said I can not go camping torrow it is torrow said ozkan want is is the time than 1 o/clock in the mroning, ozkan will you run away wuth me yes I will came so well my brother's so they get out of bed and put they cloth's on and coppet down stair Ozkan said Benerdthe you go and get some food and be quertit and JOhn you go and get the gear we ned and I will go and get the bicycle redder by than it was 2/clock and thye lifed for Dover, a policeman stop them and said wer are you out this time of morning said weare going to vistit my anter and the policeman look at me and said be on your way. in two day's time they get they and ozkan said I have get ten pounds and Benerthe said I have 1pound note and John said I have 6 pounds and I said I have 4 pound than ozken said we have 21 pounds to spond

(E) ARTHUR

3

A Walk along the Cliff one
Winter's Day at Sunset

I had been walking all day, and Naw it is sunset. The snow is loing on the prath were am walking I was walking along when in the distance I could see something on a cliff it looked like a sack of rags so I went up to it, although it was Night I could still see because the snow was making it light, so I got the, esey, when I got there I could see what it was it was a wolf it was still alive but it was fresing cold when I looked one of his legs were brocken so I got my and I was just going to shot it when I throught I could take it home with me. So I got two bits of wood and tidd them on his leg, then I pick him up and went to walk away when I saw two of her babyes were she had be laying, so I put them into to my bag, I walked over the cliff when I saw a lot of her feet prints, where the other wolfs had Been, I had just got to the wood when I herd the wolf, there was a pack of about 50 coming to kill me so ran, I saw I little house in front of me so I ran into there, I got my gun and shot six and the other ran away, about six o'clock in the morning I herd the wolfes coming agan, I jumped to my feet got my gun and shot one, but this time they got in the window and as they were coming I Shot them by Now they had over pawer me, thye stop and got into a line they were just going to atack when the dog that has drock his leg brat, and one of the dogs went for her and I shot in all the other went alt the door. the

dog that brock her leg was laying on the bed went meal dog it must have been her husband when her leg got better she went with her husband and her to son and I went back home to England.

(E) KENNETH

4

My Family

I have got two sisters and one brother. My eldest sister is twenty fiva she lives in essex with her husband Richard. my sisters name is Shielry Hurley. My other sister who's name is Ann has got a flat at Highbue. Grange she is twenty years old. My brother lives downstairs to me wit his wife and four Children. Ian who is five years old has got the same name as my brother, Paul is three years old. Tracey two years and Lesley wight months. My brother is twenty four, Renee my sister-in law is twenty three. I live upstairs with my mother and father. We all often go out for the day in my borther's car. My sister-in law and I always go out for the day. I foten baby sit for her at nights while my brother takes her out. All of this week she had to live upstairs with us while she had a new ceiling put in. Shiela works in an office she likes it there and is earning very good money. Richard is assistant Manager for Martin hats. when the manager retires Richard is going to became Manager. Ian is a Chauffeur sometimes he has to drive the hurst with the coffin in it, or else he does weddings. My father is a p[illegible]ter and has worked in the print all his life, He works all Saturday nigh[illegible] on the Sunday Times He brings home lots of magazines and pictures. Little Ian loves dancing to pop records and he know's who sings them.

(E) WENDY

5

Alone

One day in the year 63 a man was getting ready to be the first man on mars the time three oclock in the morning the place U.S.A. destination Mars, reson find out what Mars is like if there is any life on mars, take off 3-40 hundred hours. Name Jim Ford age 21.

Take off time starting now 19, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12, 11, 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1. blast off.

This was the time of alone for Jim the time was going fast the atmospher very thin air droping Jim felt very tierd he blacked out for about a half

hour juring that time he could remember all his child hood starting at five till he was twenty the month May dated the 12th—time 12.30 hours near mars.

Landing on mars Jim felt afraid and alone.

On landing on mars the fuel was leaking, on mars he whats for a call to come through from earth no call atmospher no good for wirless waves cant reach earth or Mars.

Alone for some time he whent mad. When he got back to earth he could not talk to people.

(E) TREVOR

6

Alone

one night i was waiting at a bus stop after leveing a friends party to go home, and the sky went black and it was pich dark and it started to rain and i sheltered under a tree. The time seemed to go very slowly, then i saw a flash of lightening and i hard thunder and it was still pouring with rain and it carred of for half an hour, then it stopped. i came out from under the tree the bus had still not come fore now it was cold and wet and the minutes seemed to be hours. by this time i was bord stiff and dcided walking up and down by this time night was coming in its full and in the disance i saw my bus coming to moy relief and when it stopped i climbed on and and the bus started away.

(E) ALAN

7

Alone

I went on holiday for two weeks last year, and I went to my uncles. The first day I was there I went and had a look around the place. The second day I was walking along the seashore and up one end of the beach there was a large cave I went down a little way, It was cold down there so I went back to my uncles for my dinner. Then in the afternoon I went to the swimming pool.

(E) GARY

8

My First Dance

My first dance was an occasion I did not look forward to. From what I had heard from others, dances were liable to become boring affairs.

At first the atmosphere was so strained I found a magazine, sat in a corner and read it in disgust. Fortunately this state of affairs did not last for long. One of the girls dared one of the boys to eat three cakes in two minuites which he did, with a bit of cheating. Somebody started playing records and the party picked up amazingly quickly. I asked a girl to dance, her name was Susan and we talked about Mods and Rockers.

More dares were given and accepted, I was dared to imitate Cassius Clay which I did, in the middle of my imitation I slipped and fell much to the delight of everybody else.

Food was laid out on a table, it was a buffet and I distinctly remember nearly being choked by swallowing a large crisp.

Fortunately there were no adults present at the party, if there had been I'm sure the party would have been a failure. It began to get late and guests started leaving, somebody locked the sitting room door behind me and I had to climb out of a window and walk round the the front door for readmittance.

The dancing did not stop till about midnight I stayed until about half-past eleven which was the latest I could stay until. Reluctantly I said goodbye my hostess and to her parents and to everyone else. Luckily I got a lift home or otherwise I might have had a very long journey home a thought I did not particularly relish as the party was held in South London.

In spite of the lift I still arrived home late and very, very tired.

(D) GEORGE

9

Alone

As I leave a friend each night at the bottom of Robson Road, West Norwood, A sudden fear of coldness runs up and down my body, as this road has cemetry running along side it, all the way up, and I have to walk past it.

All imagntanif things enter my mind such as ghost's, Devil's, and all sorts of thing, it doesn't seem as if I have walked about five hundred yards, when I reach the top but miles and miles.

On the other side of the road are empty houses which are being pulled down except for some which are still in use, and if the wind is blowing, dustbin lids, windows, and fences rattle, and it makes you shudder all over, and gives you a funny feeling up your spine.

Only a few cars and other vehicles pass, One day last week I was walking up there, and a cat ran right in front of my feet, it scared me so much that I nearly had a heart-attack and had to start running.

When I reach the end I give a sigh of relief and realise what lonlyness is.

(D) GERALDINE

10

Alone

I had turned the corner into the lane when with a small 'phut' the engine cut.

I was on my way to the Somerset fair, on my motorbike, to see a few of my old acquaintances.

As the engine died, I pulled in the clutch, a put the engine into neutral. Having got off I started to check the engine. After dismantling the carburetor and finding nothing wrong I checked the feul supply. I checked the tank and immediately all my hopes of starting again were extinguished. There was no feul, and yet the feul indicator registered half full.

Having found the trouble I surveyed the scene. I found that there were no signs of civilization in sight. Here I was, alone with nothing but a feulless motor-bike.

I decided that I would abandon the motorbike and concentrate on finding some feul.

I set off towards a distant hill from where, I would have a clear view of the surrounding country. It would not have been so bad if there had been someone to talk to, but there wasn't anybody.

It took aboult half an hour to reach the base of the hill and about a further quarter of an hour to climb it.

I reached the top and surveyed the scene. To the North there were no signs of civilization but to the south I saw a small village about one mile away.

I set off downhill and stroole towards my destination. Through fields and woods I went, until I was at the village. What a peculiar feeling, having someone to talk to. After pondering for a while I stroole toward the filling station.

(D) FRED

11

My First Camp

It was the first time I had been to summer school, and naturally I looked forward to it. Unfortunately, none of my friends were going so I had to make new ones.

When I arrived I found that boys had been before, and that they made friends and went round together. After the first couple of days I started talking to them, but still didn't feel like one of them. When I walked around I felt as if people were looking at me, and saying, he's a newcomer I wonder what he's like; but of course they weren't.

On the first Saturday night I was there they had a campfire dinner, and I didn't know what to do. I felt such a fool sitting there doing nothing whilst the others were cooking chicken. I wondered whether anybody was looking at me and whispering to the person sitting next to him about me.

All my fear's about people talking and looking at me vanished when on the Sunday one of the boys asked me to play cricket against a neighbouring team. I readily accepted, and kicked myself for being such a fool.

(D) DENNIS

12

Alone

People alone, as in the case of old people, is very boring and, during this period many thoughts pass through ones mind. Usually sad or unpleasant things. For instance, somebody who died recently, or how you treated somebody badly. Thoughs like this tend to depress you, and maybe, worry you. Being alone, I think, certainly should be a time to think and not to waste time.

My mothers friend was talking to a woman who had just lost her husband. She was very upset because of the way she had treated him before he died.

He had come home one evening and seemed quite alright. When they sat down for the evening he said he did not feel well. A few minutes before he had felt quite normal. She asked him a bit sarcasticly, if he would like her to get a drink of water. Much to her amazement he said yes; she flounced out of the room to fetch it. When she came back he was dead. At first she thought he was playing, but no, he was dead.

This poor woman now wished she had not been so silly, but had done it with a smile. And now she was alone, it was time to think how she

should have acted. Many of us at one time or another get faced with this and when it is to late, we are always sorry. I think she will always remember this, and he will never know that, she did not mean it and is sorry.

Sometimes at home, when a member of my family says they do not feel well I sometimes say 'don't you?' and leave it at that as though I disbelieve them. If only I could remember this women I do not think I would do it. After all, they might not be alive when I get home.

(D) SHEILA

13

My First Dance

Ah well I'm here now, I might as well go through with It. Right my entrance money in this pocket, some money to buy some drings in this pocket.

'Entrance money, please' said A man from behind a partition who was collecting everybody elses money. I took the money out of my pocket and slid it under the glass partition, as if I'd done it a hundred times before, and was just about to walk away when

'Here you've forgotten you change and your ticket'

I felt A deep red grow on my face as I wlaked back to the desk and took my sixpence and the ticket thanked him and walked away.

I was now in a small room about ten by six, It had a large opening which led to a part of what looked like a large room, where I saw only a few tables through the opening that can't be the dance floor.

'Do you want me to put you coat away?'

I said yes please and walked over to a man behind a counter 'threepence, please?'

I gave him the threepence and I saw him put my coat on a long rack full of coats then beside them were three more rack also full of coats. There must be at least a hundred people here, I must know somebody.

I walked through the opening and found myself in a long rectangular room in which were many small round tables around which boys and girls sat drinking various types of drink. At the upper end of the room was a bar around which sat more boys and girls drinking and talking. I walked dorn to the other end with the intention of having a Pepsi-cola, when I got down the the bar I saw a large opening through which was the dance hall.

I stepped inside, what a large dark place, packed with more boys and girls talking, dancing and smoking. It was so dark I could hardly see, I didn't know how the people knew who their dancing with. I walked in a

little bit father and began to mingle with the crowd. So many people I've never seen so many people before in my life. Along each side of the wall were small tables and chairs with small lamps which emitted a red glow. I began to look at the people dancing all the boys were wearing boots with chisel toes and trousers with no turn ups, I looked down at my feet and noticed that my trousers had turnups. No one will notice I tried to convince myself, oh good theres another boy over there with turnups on his trousers, I thought.

Whose that with his back turned towards me I'm sure I know him, It's old Robert from School Ill go over and say hello.

'Hello'

'Oh Hello, What brings you here'

'Oh I had nowhere else to go' which I knew was a lie. This is the first dance I'd ever been to, I hope he wouldn't see through my lie.

'Oh by the way Pete this is Dave'

'Hi Pete'

'Hi Dave'

I felt sure I was going to have a good time Now.

(c) MICHAEL

14

Alone

I was alone in this old desolate house on the moors. I was glad to be away from the din and bubbub of the rest of the family, the peace the house offered seemed to be welcoming and it felt as if the house had been built especially for me. Often I would go and sit in this old house, nearly always I'd sit here and think about past times, of rows I'd had with my step father, and always of my poor mother who had to look after such a monster.

Today I had come down here, not only to think but because I wanted to be alone. It seems funny for me, but I'd never ever given a thought to what it would be like to be alone. I sat for ages in the old room at the front, staring out into the mellow sky and the dirty looking moor. It was so peaceful. Nobody seemed to notice if I was here or not. The mice ran about doing their daily work. The bird carried on building their nests in the wooden beams of the room. There were even a couple of old bats roosting in the chimney. As I looked about me I found that I was like a stranger among a world that was unknown to me. I sat and thought about myself.

Here was I sitting alone in an old house. It was rather creepy but I had grown accostomed to the dark dingy rooms. I now began to think of

everyone back in the house, why I don't know, maybe its because I am beginning to feel alone, unwanted and a little,—I'm ahamed to admit, frightened.

I was sure that there was someone in the place with me, but I couldn't bring myself to look round. But I wondered, I wondered why I had wanted to try and feel alone. Was it because I only had half the love that I needed? I'll never know. But at least I know what it feels like to be a little alone. Its horrible. You feel as if you could commit suicide. I'm never going to try and feel alone again. It will be bad enough when I get old and have to be alone because I'm not wanted. So I don't think I'd ever try to be what I don't want to be anymore.

(c) PAULINE

15

Alone

Susan was at last coming home after two years in hospital with polio. As her mother brought her home in the car Susan felt happy and excited but frightened at going out into the big wide world outside the hospital for the first time. As the big black car pulled up outside their house, Susan's two brothers came running to meet her. Although they had visited her in hospital Susan felt as if she was meeting them for the first time; she felt so strange. Her father was waiting at the front door, dressed in rather tatered clothes with an apron on, he had a tea-towel over his shoulder and a cup in his hand. He explained that he hadn't expected them back so soon and went upstairs and changed.

Susan found living at home very different from life in the hospital, and tomorrow would be her first day back at school. The school was only down at the bottom of the road and her mother thought it would be best if she walked. There were all the other children running and playing along the street and Susan felt so concious of her limp but her mother assured her that it was only slight and that it could hardly be noticed.

Susan was thinking back to the time before she went into hospital when she played the leading part in the school play. She had always been fond of acting and was wondering what play the school would be doing this term. As she walked into the classroom she felt thousands of eyes boring holes in to her. Miss Jones' face lit up as she saw Susan and she walked across the classroom to welcome her back.

The first lesson was pysical Education and Mary Allen came over to Susan and advised her to sit out otherwise she would slow all the other children down. Before she went away Susan was in group seven, the top

group but as she changed into her shorts her heart sank as Miss Elliot came over and told her to start in the beginner's group one. As she walked slowly into the large hall she new everyone would look at her thin leg and they were but only to see if she was alright. They played a few games and she felt so silly and stupid and even clumsy in the beginners group. She wanted to cry so she ran out and into medical room where she flopped down into the chair and burst into tears. Miss Elliot ran in after her to try to comfort her.

The time went by and Miss Elliot explained that she would have to get back to her class. Then Susan said what play is the school going to do this term and Miss Elliot said The Pied Piper.

(c) SANDRA

16

A Task

When my girl friends mother decided to throw a party, I was asked if I would like to go. Naturally I said I would like to, and I volunteered to help arrange it. We all put a lot of hard work into the front room. When we eventually succeeded in getting the last item of furniture out, it was nearly 5 o/c and we still had forms and a collapsible table to bring in. By the time we had manhandled the the table through the door got it set up and the forms in, nearly an hour had passed, and the guests were supposed to be arriving at 6.30. So, there were four of us to get washed and changed in half an hour. We only just made it and there I was, ready just in time, feeling slightly worried.

When everybody had arrived, I was introduced round. I hoped for our sakes that the party was a success. There I was, hoping I looked calm. cool and collected, but inside I was really on edge. I was hoping and praying that the guests wouldn't let us down, by deciding that they only wanted to talk to someone they hadn't seen for months. After the party had started, and everybody knew everybody else, we started playing dancing music to try and get it going. That didn't work and I was getting most annoyed inside. So as that failed we had a snowball waltz. That failed and I really was getting desperate, annoyed and beginning to feel a bit fed up. In deperation, we had a snowball twist. Much to my amazement, it worked. That really made my day, when we really hadn't thought that it wouldn't work. There wasn't a soul left sitting down, everyone was up and dancing. That made me a lot happier, and I think that seeing that old lady of over 60 doing the twist, changed my opinion of some old people slightly.

When the party ended and the guests were leaving, I was most relieved to hear them say how much they had enjoyed themselves. This made my spirits rise, and I looked forward to the next one more than I did half-way through the party.

(c) RICHARD

17

My First Pop Performance

It was about a year ago that this particular event took place. I was taken by two friends to a club in Richmond, Surrey, to see a Pop group perform live on the stage. It was the first time I had ever seen such a spectacle, and I was looking forward to it with a mixture of pleasant excitement and awe.

On entering the club, I was immediately aware of the accute heat which was made worse by the hundreds of teenagers all herded together. However, I was the only one who seemed to notice the heat, so I made no comment about it to my friends. Quite suddenly the curtain went up, and the four man pop group known as the 'Yardbirds' burst into tune. All the lights were put out, and the noise made by the group was excessivly loud. But once again, I was aware that nobody seemed in the least bit worried, not even worried about the amplifier being so loud that the words of the song could not be heard.

I stood to one side, feeling out of things, as if all the other people were avoiding me on purpose. I warded off any attempt by my two friends to make me dance. All around me, people were talking and dancing. It was is if they all new each other. As if they were all brothers, sisters and cousins, and I was the odd one out. After playing several slow numbers, the group started playing a fast beaty song.

'Who recorded that?' asked one of the girls who was talking with my two friends. Nobody seemed to know, but I did. I did not know wheather or not to tell her, but finally I managed to blurt out.

'Chuck Berry!'

'Thats it', she said, 'Chuck Berry; are you a fan of his?'

Somehow I was drawn into a conversation. I thought at the time how easy it had been to start talking to a group of young people. We talked about Pop stars, the bomb, almost anything, and when we finally left for home, I vowed to go back the following week. I've been going their ever since.

(c) ROGER

18

Alone

I felt rather ill one day and my mother advised me to go to the doctors. It was fairly late in the morning and morning surgery would soon be over. I hurried down the street the best I could untill I was standing outside an old building with a silver plaque by the side of the door. I pushed open the door into the lobby and as I pushed open the door to the waiting room I heard a stange noise. My mistake, it was a man singing. I stuck my head round the edge of the door and saw a man in his late thirties prancing about the waiting room. It looked so funny, the man was singing an old song and as he did so he danced around the large table in the centre of the room. Suddenly he sprang on to it and tried to do tap dancing. Then he jumped off the table on to the floor, still singing. He straightened himself up and groaned.

'Mustn't do that to often,' he muttered. He then began to look at the numerous posters on the wall. He read them out loud as he went pass them. 'Smoking can cause cancer, coughs and sneezes spread deaseses. If you drink don't drive, if you drive don't drink.'

Some of these particularly interested him and he started singing them to tunes old and new. Some of them sounded really funny and I could hardly stop myself from laughing. His eyes fell upon the mirror on one wall. He stood in front of it and tried to impersonate famous people. My reflection was caught in the mirror and he turned suddenly to face me!

'Oh', he said with a worried expression that turned into a forced grin. 'Funny the things you do when you're alone, isn't it?'

'Yes' I smiled back, and then I sat down and picked up a book to read, secretly laughing to myself.

(B) ANN

19

Alone

It was a few weeks after Christmas when my uncle died and for the first time in her life my aunty was alone. Although they weren't a very contented couple, my aunty took it very badly. She lived in the country far from any of her relatives which made things worse.

A few weeks after the funeral we asked her if she would like to spend a month or so with us at our house, but she refused saying that she would

rather be alone. So seeing that we couldn't persuade her to come and stay with us, I decided that I would go and stay with her for a couple of weeks. I packed a few clothes and caught the ten-thirty train. When I reached the station I asked the Porter if he could direct me to 'Anvil Villa'. As soon as I mentioned it, his face seemed too light up and turning towards me he said, 'are you by any chance a relative of Mrs. Moore? I replied 'yes I'm her neice', why? 'Well since the death of her husband she's never been the same, she stays in her house all day, and if anybody knocks she just tells them to go away she wants to be alone'. After telling me this he directed me to my aunts house, and seemed very relieved when I told him I would be staying with her for a couple of weeks. After saying goodbye I proceeded on down the long road, which led into Chestnut Road.

It was a long but pleasant walk and it was about a quarter of an hour later that I found myself face to face with 'Anvil Villa'. I panicked for a minute before I managed to force myself to knock on the door, I waited but there was no reply so I knocked again. This time a voice said, 'go away I don't want to see anyone, just leave me alone'. 'It's me' I replied 'your niece Ann. 'What do you want'? 'I've come to see you aunty please open the door'. There was a short pause until I heard her footsteps coming towards the door, and then came the clock as she opened the door. There stood my aunty, her hair completely grey, her face withdrawn, wearing a old black dress, which was torn and tattered. She put her arms around me, and began to cry 'I'm so glad to see you I've been so lonely since the death of your uncle'. I picked up my case, shut the door and made my way towards the dinning room. Although it was only mid-day the curtains were pulled. Looking at me she said I haven't been able to face the light, all I've been doing is sitting here alone, thinking about the past. I asked her when she had last eaten, I can't remember was her reply. I pictured in my mind the life she must of been leading, an middle-aged women sitting alone in a chair situated in the corner of a large room, day in day out, seeing and speaking to no-one. Having lost all interest in the outside world, it was then that I realised just what loneless must be like, and how fortunate I was not to have had the experience of it. My only problem now was to think of a way to relieve my aunty of her loneiless. This, I realised was going to be a hard but worthwhile job.

As we sat down by the fire she started to tell me of the life she had led. How as a little girl of seven she had lost both her parents, (this I already knew being as my mum was her sister.) and was seperated from her sister and brother's and sent to an orphanage.

(B) ANGELA

20

Alone

I use to watch him coming to school alone in the mornings and going home alone in the evenings. He sat alone in class, he ate alone and at break he would stay by himself alone. It wasn't because he was selfich why he was all alone, or because he didn't want any friends. Anyone could tell by the look in his eyes that he was the loneliest creature in the world, and that he longed for someone to call his friend more than how he longed for food. Although it pained me to see him like that, something held me back from going up to him and trying to be friendly with him. Furthermore, all of my good friends felt different from the way I did. They threatened that if I talked to him, they wouldnt speak to me any more. You couldn't blame them really, because not many people would like to be seen with a person whose appearance was appalling, whose teeth hadn't be brushed for days or maybe weeks, who hadn't had a bath for weeks and whose hair was dirty and untidy. In spite of all this, I was still sorry for him, I just couldn't get my eyes of him, and the sad look in his eyes did something to my heart.

One day I saw him standing alone under the shed and I looked at his eyes and they looked as if he had been crying. Something jerked me inside and I couldn't bear it any longer. I just had to talk to him, even at the risk of being insulted, because he looked proud and I knew he might not like to be sorry for or pitied. I went up to him and said 'hello' he stared at me for a long while looking as if he couldn't believe that someone had said a kind word to him or smiled at him. I assured him that I was his friend if he wanted me to. He smiled for an answer and I took his thin hand in mine and we walked home together and have been walking home together ever since, Tom and I.

(B) DELROSE

21

The Initiative Test

One evening, at my local youth club, there was to be an initiative test. This meant that the members who were in groups of three had to collect such articles as a potato, picture of the Queen and certain bus tickets. One of the articles was a beer mat.

My group decided that I should get the beer mat and five minutes later we all split up.

Suddenly I realised that I would have to enter a public house, where I had never been before, and ask for a beer mat. I shuddered and went cold. Then I braced myself, I thought that I must go in although I had no desire to do so. The thought also crossed my mind that some of the other teams may also have asked at this same pub, and the barman might not welcome any more nuisances.

I walked on further and rather disheartened I came to the main road where there was a public house. The place did not look inviting but I walked up to the saloon door and pushed it open. Suddenly many pairs of eyes fixed their gaze on me, as if I was an undiscovered creature. I walked over to the bar and gradually the men carried on conversing with each other.

I waited at the bar, I was completely petrified with fear. After about two minutes which seemed like forever of waiting the barman came to me. He looked at me and I suppose he was expecting me to ask for a drink and then throw me out. I asked my foolish question 'Have you any beermats please?' He replied than he had and gave me about four of them. I was very glad and thanked him and went out, immensely relieved of my burden.

On the way back to the club I exchanged one beer mat for half a cigar end which was one of the required items. Unfortunately our group did not win the initiative test but we all enjoyed it.

(B) ROBERT

22

Alone

To me, 'alone' is a word with a very sad meaning. A person may be alone in several different ways; he may be alone literally, perhaps on a desert island or in a deserted street at night, or in any other place where no-one else is present. He may wish to be alone or have no other alternative, but he may be with a great number of other people and yet still feel alone in the world.

Those for whom I have the most sympathy are orphans, as they have no family to care for them and must feel extremely lonely at times. Others who I have sympathy for are those whose homes have broken up, they also must feel lonely when separated from the rest of their family.

Although 'alone' has a sad meaning to some people, it has a peaceful meaning to others. Many people like to go alone for their holiday to get away from the laborious routine of work, so that they can have some peace. Others enjoy working alone as they find concentration easier. But

I, personally, prefer anothers company as when you are with another person you have someone with whom you can share your interests and with whom you may confer when seeking advice. I like to share my leisure with others but when it comes to work, I prefer to be alone.

Those who find solitude the most boring and unhappy are people like convicts who live alone as a punishment. In their case I do not have any sympathy, as their loneliness is caused by their own stupidity. If they had not broken the law, they would never have found themselves in that situation. However, there must a few people in the prison cells to-day who are suffering unfair sentences of imprisonment, due to being wrongly convicted of crimes which they have not committed, but only the prisoners themselves know whether this is true.

The loneliest years of one's life are the last years. Old people often live alone and find life very tedious. It is because of this that younger people should visit old people more often and help them to enjoy the last years of their life. These people feel the hardships of loneliness more than the younger people and therefore appreciate the company of others.

(B) MOIRA

23

Our First Job

My father had just found us our first job. I joined a 'group' a few months ago through a friend and we had all got on quite well together. We practised nearly every Saturday, we couldn't make more frequent as we all lived so far away from each other.

Anyway my father began to like us, he kept saying we were very good. I play the drums. Now I had played a few times before at socials and weddings with my father and I was never afraid or nervous because my father and uncle Den were always there.

Someone in my father's firm had asked him to play at his daughter's friend twenty-first birthday party. My father said that he knew a modern guitar and drum group that might do it. So he asked us.

We agreed and began to practise more. We all got very excited. The day came, I had been off school as I had phlarengytis which I got from a friend. I still had a sore throat and I wasn't supposed to go out I went to the swimming baths and stayed on the grass as it was a boiling hot day.

At ? o'clock my father came and picked me up. Up till now I had been looking forward to it and I wasn't nervous. We got there in about fifteen minutes. It was a small hall just outsite Wembley. We got my drums out the car and put them in the hall. By now I was sweating like mad. Still I

sat down had a drink of beer and felt much calmer. I even took a walk over the road to an off-licence for a packet of cigarettes. I got back and started smoking like mad. Everyone was looking at my drums and of course my mother had to point out that I was the drummer.

She came over with another woman, I was sweating again, the other woman said, 'how old is he seventeen?'. my mother said. 'no he's fifteen.' There was then a general buzz of 'he' only fifteen, 'smoking at his age, 'isn't he big for his age.' I'm sure my face must have turned purple. I was thinking of everybody looking at me scrutinising me looking at my clothes, shoes, hair build. I tried to convince myself they weren't but there was about twenty five people looking at me. I got out another cigarette and puffed away at that like mad. Mum was nattering on about the group. I went over to my drums and started fiddling with them. Then father came over with another drink which cooled me and calmed me down. Everybody was still looking at me I didn't mind they could. I didn't care. I was different to them. I could play the drums they couldn't, I was in a group they weren't.

All this went through my mind, I blocked it off and seriously started putting my drums up. I was putting them up steadily and easily when there was a loud 'Hello!' inmy ear. I nearly jumped out of my skin. It was Bernie our bass player. Thank God I thought, company at last. He said, 'Did you remember the microphone stand?', 'Oh No', came the reply, 'It dosen't matter,' said Bernie and he gave me a cigarette. Which calmed me down a great deal.

Then all the others arrived they were all in a happy mood and I caught like a fever. We joking laughing, I couldn't care less whether anybody looked at me now. We all got ready. Our first number was an instrumental. The introduction was a tricky one, specially for me and missed out about four bars of drumming but I soon picked up and went on without incident. I began to get much more confidence in myself and we all ended up playing much better than we normally did.

They kept on coming up with trays of beer and food. But I was still worried about the first mistakes I made. Noone seemed to notice it. Then I remembered something I had discovered myself. Until I started drumming never noticed mistakes in music, and must admit, to anyone who doesn't know anything about music you wouldn't notice them.

We all began to feel happier even though the microphone was hanging from the rafters. After a while they started shouting for Encores and we did them. This put our morale right up.

(B) JOHN

24

Alone

Mrs. King sat in the front room of her small house in London. She had just come home from the hospital after being told of her husbands death. She thanked God that it had been a peaceful end. Mrs. King was seventy two years of age, and had spent fifty fours very happy years of marriage. She had had four lovely children, three of whom were married with children of their own. The youngest, Sonia, had recently gone out to Rhodesia with a team of doctors and nurses.

As she sat there on the sofa, still with her hat and coat on, Mrs. King felt horribly alone. It was that cold feeling that she had always dreaded. Ever since she was young and had read and heard about old people who were alone with no one to comfort or talk to them, she had dreaded it happening to her. With her small pension she would not be able to keep on the house. She though what a good thing it was that her husband would never buy things on Hire Purchase, because she would never be able to keep up the payments.

Now she must get in touch with her children and tell them the sad news. She got up and went to the door. She made sure she had enough money and then walked down the road to the telephone box. Michael, her eldest son lived in Yorkshire. She called the operater and asked for a trunk call. When she got through Denise, her daughter-in-law answered the 'phone and Mrs. King told her the news. When she rung off, Denise was in a terrible state. She had been very fond of her father-in-law. Mrs. King went through the same process with John, her second oldest child. Now she had to 'phone Pauline her eldest daughter who was twenty five and was expecting her first baby in four months. Mrs. King prayed that she wouldn't be too upset. Luckily Peter, Pauline' husband, answered the 'phone and promised to break the news gently to her. Mrs. King was thankful she had got that over. She came out of the telephone box and walked round the corner to the Post Office. She got a telegram sent off to Sonia and then walked slowly home.

As she walked in the door she caught sight of a photograph of her husband, four children and her. It was taken at the sea-side one year when the children were small. Mrs. King sat down and memorys came flooding back to her.

After about half an hour she came back to reality and remembered that everything was different now. She was alone. Alone with her memorys of such a happy life.

(A) SUSAN

25

Alone

Days get shorter and shorter, and I get older and older. The things I love have all gone, except my old rocking chair, and old tom the prise persian. The things around me too have faded, as modern new fangled things, come into view. That trumpet all day long, and the Boys outside playing football, always noise. I remember years ago, when my old man was in the brass band, those days I nearly clobbered him, for all the noise he made.

All I hear all day is tick-tock of the clock, the fire crackling and, noise. The room so dim, doesnt seem like the sun wants to come in. It was like this in the old days, although, it seemed cheerful with the children running about. Sometimes the noise seems powerful, old tom scatching, the clock ticking, fire crackling, his trumpet, boys shouting, banging, kicking, jumping, still it makes it seem as Im not alone in my old days.

Oh no that nuisance of a man, with his ratlerling milk bottles will he be round soon, breaking the silence, still old toms grateful enough.

I dread the night, for with it comes the darkness and lonliness. I never get to sleep to late, just lie awake thinking, in the old days night would be my pleasure, as I trod to the local thirst desire. The room gets dimmer, and as the wallpaper pattern disappears, a flash as the light goes on.

I wonder how Marys getting on, I havent seen her for twenty years, I remember when we used to play to-gether. Down old ally ways, climbing trees.

Memorys I hate them, they bring back forgotten joys. Still they, help to pass my lonely days.

That trumpet, the everlasting notes, he sounds flat, not like my old man, he could play well, although he got wacked everytime, he tried it in the house. I feel sleepy its getting late and the darkness I hate.

(A) PAMELA

26

My First Dance

I went to my first dance at the age of thirteen. Naturally I was nervous at the thought of meeting other people in such new surroundings, and it was not without some reluctance that I decided to go.

It was a Sunday evening, and I was at a local dance hall. I arrived there with an elder friend who had been there many times before, and he was trying to impress me a little by saying 'hello' to all the girls that he

knew there. There were not many people there then, for it was early. I certainly did not want to dance until the hall was more crowded, if I danced at all. For the moment, however, I just walked around with my friend, trying to be as friendly as I could with everyone he spoke to. Eventually, the place was packed out, with hardly room to move. The mixture of intense heat and thick cigarette smoke stifled me. The group was playing its music tremendously loudly, and this helped to cure me of my nervousness. Then my friend announced that he was 'going to 'have a dance'. Not wanting to be left on my own, I followed him to the dance floor.

I stood nearby, watching him dancing with what looked like a seventeen years old girl, but who was probably nearer thirteen, but wearing a great deal of make-up.

I tapped one foot in time to the rhythm of the music, but could not find anything to do with my hands. I put one in my pocket, but it sweated so much I soon had to take it out. Eventually I decided to light a cigarette, although I had never previously smoked. I lit one, and immediately felt more like the majority of the people there. Immediately after I finished it, I lit another one, because I wanted something to help me pluck up courage to dance. At the beginning of the next song, I strode out on to the dance floor and asked a girl to dance. I did not really care who the girl was. I began to dance very self-consciously, trying to make every movement of the dance look how I would have liked it to look.

We finished dancing and I felt much better mentally, but I felt unwell physically: the combination of heat, smoke, piercing noise, and actually smoking two cigarettes was beginning to take effect on me. I decided to go for a short walk in the fresh air.

I walked over to my friend to ask him if he would like to come with me, but he was in conversation with a couple of girls, so I did not interrupt him. I did not particularly want to go for a walk on my own, so who should I go with?

I forgot about my illness for the moment, and went and danced with the same girl that I had danced with previously. I had planned to ask this girl to come for the walk with me immediately after that dance. The dance ended and she said the customary 'thank you', and began to walk off: but I had summed up enough confidence now, and I tapped her on the shoulder and asked her if she would like to come for a walk with me.

She looked at me for a moment, and my hopes rose.

'No, thank you,' she said softly, and walked away.

All the confidence that I had gathered, all my hopes came crashing to the ground. I turned around, struck dumb, my eyes watering slightly. I stumbled to the edge of the dance floor. My friend strode over to me.

'Where have you been?' he enquired, in a loud, strong voice.

'Oh, nowhere,' I said in a low voice.

'Come over here, I've some girls to introduce you to,' he said, waving

his arm in the direction of a group of boys and girls, all about my age. We walked over to them, and soon I was 'wrapped up' in conversation with them.

Strangely enough, the episode with that other girl had rid me of any nervousness that I might have had, and I no longer felt ill.

(A) JONATHAN

27

The Grief of an Old Woman

I had finished my prep early that night, deliberately so for there was a programme I wanted to see. It was about the American Civil War, a gallant and dashing programme, but enjoyable nevertheless. My mother had gone to a meeting and my brother was playing in the bath. My father was working in the morning room and my grandmother sat in the other armchair in the lounge, her needles clicking regularly as she knitted, occasionally looking at the television over the tops of her glasses.

Her glasses always mystified me. The lenses are curved in the normal way except that at the base, it is hard to describe, a small semi-circle, the size of a thumb-nail, has been cut leaving the area quite flat, not following the natural convex shape of the lens. This, she once explained when I asked her, is for reading newspapers (she reads little else) and in order to do this she has to look downwards. This I often practised doing but it was painful and I gave it up. It seems that this method of reading is made easier by having the glasses perched nearer to the tip of the nose than is normal. This then required peering over the brown, plastic, National Health rim of the glasses when not reading, the whole method creating an appearance similar to that of an absent-minded professor. Indeed, absent-minded is quite the word where Nanny and glasses and most other things are concerned.

The programme had begun. It was about a soldier who was trapped under a cannon or something. Nanny was still knitting. The phone rang. Not unusual. Clients often rang up to talk to Daddy. The ringing stopped. Daddy was talking and I went back to watching the television. A single ding. The conversation was over. Dad came into the room looking more grave and serious than I had ever seen him or have ever seen him since, so much so that I felt sure he was being funny and he was going to burst out laughing any minute. At any rate, I wanted to for some reason, to laugh at his strange face, but stopped myself for still he did not smile. He stood in front of the television set facing Nanny and me. I cannot remember exactly his next few words.

'I have just received some terrible news. Uncle Ed has been found dead in his car. The Police are coming to pick up me and you.' (The 'you' referred to Nanny.)

The knitting stopped. I wanted to laugh and call at Daddy to get out of my way and let me watch the tele. I had to laugh. It was all one big joke. It had to be. Yes, any second now Daddy was going to burst out laughing. I turned my head and looked at my grandmother. She was no longer knitting or moving but staring straight at Daddy's face. Suddenly she said slowly and carefully, 'Oh my God' and dropped the knitting from her hands. Quickly and urgently now, 'My child, my child. What's she going to do? Oh my child Shirl, what's she going to do?'

Why did that wretched man have to go and die now? I want to watch the war programme. All of a sudden I felt very, very ashamed, ashamed that I wanted to watch a film of killing and death when my uncle, a living, talking human being had ceased. I was very ashamed yet I knew that I did want to watch the film.

Nanny had fallen back into the armchair saying all the time 'My poor, poor Shirl, what will she do?' Against my will I switched off the television. Daddy went out to phone Mummy at the meeting and to try and find someone to look after Philip and me. I was left alone in the room with my grandmother crying. Why the hell does the woman have to cry about a perfectly natural human occurrence? I was cross. She was not crying for the death of a man and because she would no longer see him but because of the consequences that his dying brought. In her mind he had been nothing but a guardian for her daughter. That surely was wrong. She was now crying louder and it made me realise that something needed doing. Philip was still in the bath, quite unaware of the happenings downstairs. I went up and told him. He got out, put on his pyjamas and came downstairs. The police came and collected Daddy and what would normally have been an exciting novelty, police coming to the door, passed unnoticed. They said that they would come back for Nanny.

I closed the street door and went back into the lounge where Philip was sitting on the settee. The only sound in the entire house was Nanny crying. She sat unmoving in the armchair, her tired grey head resting on the back of the chair. Her eyes were closed and a small red sty on the eyelid was visible. The tears flowed from her eyes and collected in a small pool where her glasses touched her cheeks. The tears flowed our round both sides of this dam and four shiny red streaks ran across her face. We tried to make her feel better, as if crying was an illness by saying, 'Not to worry' and 'that everything will be all right.' But she just sat there sobbing and saying, 'My poor girl, what will she do?' She sat loosely in the chair, looking lost and hopeless.

It was all as if it had happened before. I knew it had, many times before on the films and television. It was all too easy. We knew what to say and do because we had seen this happen before. Our words were put into our

mouths not because of what we felt but because of the standard procedure of television. Was this true of Nanny? No, her grief was real. Why? I knew I was not crying.

How long we sat, she weeping and we consoling, I cannot say, but the door bell rang. I answered it and a large policeman stood waiting there. I turned away from the door as Nanny, helped by Philip, swayed drunkenly out of the lounge into the dim lit hall. I picked up her coat and walked over to where she now stood at the far end. I had not noticed before but her stockings were rolled down and lay in loose, untidy folds on her ankles. She looked like some female tramp, her short white-grey hair untidy, her strangely shaped ankles, her tearful, worn face, and her rough hands fallen at her sides. She stood like a puppet, swaying, allowing but not helping us to put her coat on for her. And all the time she spoke to someone about her girl. The policeman watched from the doorway. The cold night air came in. We guided her to the policeman, still speaking our lines. He took her and walked her slowly away, still talking, like some drunken criminal, into the cold yellow-black night.

(A) WILLIAM

28

Vive la France!

The van rattled through straggly groups of smirking boys. It turned the corner and a head peered out for a place to park. Shuddering violently, it crawled to a stop but then suddenly leapt forward and met the wall with a bang.

'Blimey, what's that?'

'It's old Q. Look he's bashed into the wall!'

Uproarious laughter, embarrassingly loud.

'Who is he anyway? I've never seen him before.'

'You know. He's old Q. Quiet chap.'

Old Q. got out. His immense form surveyed the damage. He was horribly aware of the sniggering boys' silent comments—sneering.

'It's old Q. Quiet chap.'

Fifth form sniggers.

He shot lightning glances, right and left, like a timid animal but always looking down, at the ground. He fidgeted with his coat buttons. Already strains of a Marseillaise stuttered from trombones and came tumbling out of a Music Block window. Good gracious, Mr. W. does start his lessons early——

'It's old Q. you know!'

Get inside. Just get inside.

Jerkily through the doors and up the stairs. An impertinent little 2nd former pounced:

'Good morning, SIR!' cheekily loud.

'Good—er——'

More sniggers. He was laughing, the wretched boy was LAUGHING.

Through the second doors.

The volley of sounds hit him in the face.

The steady, fat Marseillaise sitting clumsily where it wanted to; and now several cats screeched from the belly of a violin, wailing, screaming, imploring to be released. They laboured to the height of the scale, then down again, then up; down. A nasal 'cello pranced gaily along, seemingly stepping in all the puddles it could, like a child after rain. Two silly flutes fluttered away, chattering to each other, occasionally complaining about the moronic and inaccurate plodding of the trombones. Lastly, an agonised oboe poured out its sorrows with long painful cries of anguish to anyone who cared to listen.

Work must go on.

And now into the form room. The boys rise and one of them salutes.

'Em—what's your name? You should—er—have more respect—er——'

'Yes sir!'

The boy made for the door and as he closed it a sneeze of uncontrollable laughter burst out.

Q's eyes flicked sideways and he shuffled his feet.

* * *

'As you will remember, after Mozart came the—er.' The shiny trombones still blared. 'Em—I think we'll have that window shut, Smith.'

'It won't, sir.'

'Won't what?'

'Shut sir.'

'Oh. Oh well, leave it then.'

'Yes sir.'

'And don't keep say——!' The class smiled. Q. was in Hell. This was Hell: the boys were laughing; the tramping trombones came in at the window and the heart-broken oboe crawled in underneath the door. This was the music of Hell. This was Hell.

'Oh, go to your next lesson.' Q. went out into the corridor. The noise was muffled, evilly muffled. The oboe had changed its mind and was now hiccupping happily at a fantastic speed. The violins were striding quick and determined with strong, full blows. The trombone still ploughed on—it was back to the Marseillaise again. The sounds, although totally disconnected seemed to form a weird symphony which was going somewhere. It didn't know where, but it had a definite and eccentric drive and determination.

Some of the boys were still shuffling out:

'He's nuts.' Q. hurried jerkily into the form room again, through the music staff's wash-room, into the lavatory. He locked himself in. He was alone now. Not even the trombones dared to invade his privacy here. He opened his mouth and screamed. When he had finished tears were rolling lumpily from his eyes. Whether they were from pain, sorrow or simply because his eyes were screwed shut, he didn't know. Then he dried his eyes and blew his nose and walked out into the form room. A class of new faces blinked at him hopefully. Tiny boys with national health glasses and blazers too big for them.

'Who are you?'

'P.3, sir, P.3 sir! sir, P.3, P.3, P.3, sir, sir.'

'Em—what did we do last week.'

Two more flutes were fluttering: one male, the other female. One was brash, the other a shy little thing. The brash one challenged, the shy one giggled an answer. And still the trombones faithfully honking.

'A Hungarian Folksong, Folkson, sir, Hungarian, P.3, sir.'

'And er——' The violins were on pizzicato now. Slowly and tediously they picked and the sound shot out like an annoying tap, dripping irregularly. There was that boy that had made a fool of him last week. The 'cellos were prancing again, only instead of occasional puddles the whole ground seemed to be a sheet of water. And still the Marseillaise laboured on. The class were whispering and that horrid boy was sniggering.

'You, boy, come with me.' The sickly child trooped after him—into the masters' room! This was sacred ground! Q. shut the door behind them. But he couldn't shut out the trombones. The low sink was full of filthy water. The flutes were less audible now but the trombones——

'Come here!' The class were chattering now as well. The thick, stupid trombones were battering at the door. Slowly, and with great deliberation, he grabbed the boy by the neck and thrust his head into the water. The boy struggled wildly. The other boys were now shouting at each other. The trombones hammered hysterically at the door, being too vast to creep through underneath it like the oboe. The now limp boy twitched convulsively once, again and again—the class was shreiking—and was still.

The trombones had stopped.

(A) CHRISTOPHER

THE GRADINGS AND COMMENTS

1.* HOWARD *Saying Goodbye* (E)

Although inadequate in amount and uncontrolled in spelling and punctuation this piece shows an imaginative realization of a human situation and some exploration of that experience. The reflections of the speakers are true to life, being the kind of observations made in the natural 'restricted language code' of such people, lacking depth and subtlety and expressed with characteristic gracelessness in a limited vocabulary. The piece is very simply but adequately structured by the references to the passing of time: 'only an hour to go . . . fifteen minutes left . . . well goodbye mum', and by the stages of the journey up to the final goodbyes. (There is an interesting echo of the conversation in the pub in 'The Waste Land'. Perhaps Eliot's representation was more accurate than some of his critics allow.)

There is a sense of increased pace given by the scraps of conversation in this second half culminating in the sense of drastic and enforced parting. The passage owes its coherence too to the way other characters are included only as they are concerned with 'saying goodbye'.

It is a sobering thought that the 'failure' of this piece of writing in conventional terms is no measure at all of its imaginative quality and authenticity.

2. ARTHUR *Camping* (E)

A coherent story in that all the elements are to do with the expedition. Adequate in length but largely unorganized. Structure and language control very weak, present and past tenses not differentiated, punctuation lacking or incorrect, spelling both phonetic and careless, repetitions and omissions.

Compare for structure and paragraphing with Kenneth's piece below.

3. KENNETH *A Walk along the Cliff one Winter's Day at Sunset* (E)

There does seem to be some kind of imaginative coherence here. The experience described is weird and frightening. Adequate in length with some kind of continuous story which the written language cannot carry. There is a primitive attempt at paragraphing and sentence division but again the punctuation is inadequate to the task.

4. WENDY *My Family* (E)

This piece shows an advance in technical control. It is adequately structured with punctuation of the sentence division more often right than wrong (compare Kenneth's and Arthur's pieces above) but it is in fact no more than a list of items.

5. TREVOR *Alone* (E)

There may be an imaginative experience here but the language controlling the boy's writing is that of television puppetry space fiction and the experience is not communicated. He seems unable to use the basic sentence forms or to develop a narrative sequence, substituting for these a clipped and dehumanized jargon from the only kind of narrative he appears to know.

6. ALAN *Alone* (E)

There is some attempt to recreate an experience here but after a fair start his control of even this low level of language structure fails. Although there is a narrative sequence the essay is far too short and lacks shape.

7. GARY *Alone* (E)

A careful piece of writing by a very slow pupil. Perhaps the great care he is taking prevents him from seeing the elements in the story in relation to each other, hence his level, [illegible]ried tone. Simple repetitive sentences and too short to reveal very much.

---

8. GEORGE *My First Dance* (D)

Although this has a fluency that the previous essays have lacked, it is a bald and disjointed piece of writing. There is a series of incidents which do not add up to anything in the way of an event. There are

some bad errors and a number of inconsistencies. Control of sentence structure and punctuation is poor.

9. GERALDINE *Alone* (D)

The definite progression and ending here give this essay shape and there is exploration of personal experience. Paragraph (3) shows a variety of sentence structure which is quite well controlled (compare with George's piece above). A restricted code of expression is apparent in 'shudder', 'I nearly had a heart attack' and 'a funny feeling down your spine'. The writer is hampered by the use of the habitual present which she abandoned in paragraph (4).

10.* FRED *Alone* (D)

This passage shows some control of the conventions of the written language, but fails in every other way. Although the writer has some interest in the failure of the motor-bike, he has none in the walk to the village, and the narrative here is quite bald, quite unrealized. The phrase 'after pondering for a while' in the last sentence, reveals that he has not entered imaginatively into the experience described: it is incredible that anyone should pause to 'ponder' at this point in the story. The shapelessness of the composition is accentuated by one or two sentences which mislead the reader into expecting an increase in tension: for example, 'there I was, alone with nothing but a feulless motor-bike' is followed by flat narrative. There is an odd mixture of literary turns of phrase ('through fields and woods I went', 'surveyed the scene') and clichés from everyday speech ('would not have been so bad', 'what a peculiar feeling'). The whole story lacks the imaginative effort which would give it coherence.

11. DENNIS *My First Camp* (D)

Whilst this is a coherent piece of writing with everything relating to the main theme it is very short and deficient in interesting detail. He confines himself to making statements about his feelings, does not explore them or relate them to his environment. It is a piece of description lacking the personal touch of the piece by Jonathan below.

12. SHEILA *Alone* (D)

This has the necessary basic coherence and a good shape. The writer has entered imaginatively into a terrifying experience of loneliness which integrates all the parts of the essay. She can generalize and

move from the general to the particular and back again. There is a certain obscurity of thought in the first paragraph but subsequently the sentence structures are adequate to create and communicate experience.

---

13 MICHAEL *My First Dance* (C)

In spite of the mass of detailed description this piece does not satisfy; no strong feeling is conveyed by the writer. The central feeling of loneliness demanded by the subject is again and again overlaid by assertions of self-assurance which are unconvincing. Although the narrator is thereby enabled to recover from thoughts of loneliness and of being the odd man out, he is also prevented from getting down into the experience of loneliness to express it in authentic terms of feeling. There are details of observation which ring sharply true to actual personal experience, e.g., the coat rack calculation and the trouser turn-ups, but the story lacks a focus on the central feeling and the coherence that would dictate variety of treatment of the incidents. Here all the details are given the same prominence. The story is also marred by many errors including elementary errors in punctuation.

14.* PAULINE *Alone* (C)

This piece caused a great deal of discussion and controversy among the group and was marked over the whole range of grades by different individuals. It is clearly the result of a terribly hard effort to make the most of the subject in the way demanded by the terms of the question as set. There are strong literary echoes: 'the house on the moors', 'the mellow sky', and 'the dirty looking moor'; and Disneyland images of bats, mice and birds. The background situation of the step-father and unwanted step-daughter relationship is another strong literary echo and this dramatization is responsible for the final insincerity of the thought about suicide, a woman's magazine solution to the problem which the last paragraph attempts to explore at depth. It is not successful in creating the experience of loneliness, perhaps because it lapses into the language of chat, 'this house', 'back home', and 'it will be bad enough' where it should maintain a level of controlled reflection. But compared with George's piece above it is more lucid and better put together, fluent and made to a pattern where George's is disjointed and patternless.

15. SANDRA *Alone* (C)

Although this is a 'stock' story, there is more here than the cliché. The story is backed by real school experience and there is some attempt to explore that experience. The length is reasonable and although there is not such a range of vocabulary (e.g. 'tatered clothes') and structure as there is in Angela's there is some competent control of language.

16. RICHARD *A Task* (C)

The straightforward competence of this piece of writing puts it above Sandra's. Richard can tell his story well so that it has a definite shape. His feelings about the elements of the story give the whole a coherence and permit that varied treatment that was lacking in Michael's story. The elements are not all given the same degree of importance. He succeeds in communicating his experience with a somewhat limited range of expression of emotion (note his wonderful reverse climax 'desperate, annoyed, a bit fed up'!)

17. ROGER *My First Pop Performance* (C)

There are obvious limitations here. There is no marked range of vocabulary nor of structures. The story of this experience has not the sensitivity nor the flexibility of John's. But, within the limits that Roger has set himself, this is a competent piece of writing and the elements come together in a coherent whole.

---

18. ANN *Alone* (B)

This is a competent piece of anecdotage with an appropriate light style. The effect breaks down where Ann intrudes herself and her own comments. There are conscious literary efforts here, e.g., 'worried expression turning into a forced grin'. The paragraph telling how the man read the posters is better because more direct.

19. ANGELA *Alone* (B)

Angela is able to hold this whole long story in view as she writes; time has not allowed her to finish the story. She writes fluently and narrative, dialogue and thought are all adequately structured. This detached telling of the story is lacking in Ann's work.

20. DELROSE *Alone* (B)

Here is a very conscious story telling, e.g., repetition of 'alone' at the start. The total effect of uncontrolled sentiment verging upon sentimentality has been deliberately pursued however mistaken and unconvincing it may be to the adult reader. This is a vivid piece of writing although it lacks the varied sentence structure of Angela's, and is guilty of the exaggerations in detail of its genre.

21. ROBERT *The Initiative Test* (B)

Robert expresses his feelings well in this well focussed narrative and there is a range of sentence structures and a wide vocabulary. The weakness here lies in the content which is rather thin. This is more obvious when it is compared with John's story.

22.* MOIRA *Alone* (B)

This piece of writing caused a great deal of discussion in the group for it represents the type of G.C.E. pass essay which we do not want to encourage. Technically it is very competent but the logic breaks down and Moira relies on glib generalizations which she does not bother to question or to substantiate. She tells us in paragraph (1) that 'alone' is a word with a very sad meaning. Why, we do not know, for she mentions in the same paragraph a man who wants to be alone and explains in paragraph (3) that she prefers to be alone when she is working and agrees that to be alone is not always sad. In rather uneasy balance to these comments on the sadness of being alone comes a somewhat detached allocation of sympathy to those who are alone. This leads to the 'convict' passage which is a rather uncontrolled digression—though the connection between any two paragraphs is not very well marked. The essay is brought to an end by the uncritical assertions that '*these people* feel the hardships of loneliness more than the younger people and *therefore* appreciate the company of others'.

This is an interesting essay because, although there is an attempt at organization here, it is external to the meaning or experience of the title. There is no organic growth and the movement of the essay is not dictated by its own nature at a subconscious level. Consequently it lacks meaning and coherence. The writer has not concentrated on the subject and its meaning but on performing a series of linguistic exercises whose connection with the subject is tenuous.

The apparent competence of this essay masks its emptiness as a piece of writing. Unfortunately it represents what many teachers think is demanded for G.C.E. The girl who typed the manuscript

observed that only Moira's piece would have passed as a G.C.E. essay in her school. We think this notion of what good writing is can only hinder the development of children's ability to use the written language effectively.

23. JOHN *Our First Job* (B)

Real experience is explored with sensitivity here and the experience is communicated. The technical control of language is not so competent as in Jonathan's essay nor are the paragraphs so well selected.

---

24. SUSAN *Alone* (A)

The control of this story is very marked (compare, for example, Sandra's story) and it is very competent linguistically. The range of sentence structure and the easy command of language together with the economical narrative put this story into class (A).

25. PAMELA *Alone* (A)

Although there are some technical faults and the paragraphs are rather slung together the theme of the loneliness of old age is treated with imagination. The force of this writing springs from the writer's control of the elements of the story so that each adds to the experience of loneliness, e.g., 'and the boys outside playing football, always noise . . . those days I nearly clobbered him, for all the noise he made. . . . All I hear all day is tick-tock of the clock'. The selection of material and its use and treatment are all dictated by the central experience and this concentration on the experience enables the elements to play a double role inside the whole. The trumpet, for example, is a hated noise because it is external to her and intrudes on her solitude and privacy: it is also a longed-for noise because it is the noise her old man made. On both occasions the noise emphasizes her loneliness and isolation.

26.* JONATHAN *My First Dance* (A)

The experience in this piece of writing is both vividly imagined and well-controlled. The reader is given all that he needs to understand the boy's position—the description of the heat, noise and smoke in the room, the real comments on people there, the boy's own actions,

such as his inability to keep his hands comfortably either in or out of his pockets, his low voice which contrasts with the strong voice of his friend. The whole passage has a good narrative form. After a first, rather shaky, expository paragraph, the narrative gets under way. The climax, the girl's refusal to go for a walk, is given prominence by the use of direct speech and the rhythmical form of the sentences which follow immediately after it. The last paragraphs put the whole experience into perspective.

Although there is nothing outstanding here, either in perception or in range of vocabulary and sentence-structure, it is a satisfying piece of work, convincing and coherent.

27. WILLIAM *The Grief of an Old Woman* (A)

This story, and the one that follows it (*Vive la France!*), seem to us exceptional. We have attempted to particularize what distinguishes these two.

Like a number of others, William attempts to explore another person's emotions, in this case, an old woman who is faced with a violent event. He does this by exploring his own emotions on the same occasion, and sets both against a television programme of war. The tensions that these opposed patterns of feeling set up make this a powerful piece of writing. It is a personal narrative and begins . . . 'I had finished my prep early that night, deliberately . . .' and goes on to describe an ordinary domestic scene in which he himself is intent on watching the drama of the American Civil war while his grandmother is quietly knitting, detached from the story on the screen and the sensations of the soldier trapped under the gun. Then the 'phone rings—an ordinary event in life—and on TV—and immediately the situation is reversed. His grandmother is involved in violence coming from the real world, while he is detached from this, resenting the interruption of his fictional world. Having presented this situation in a dramatic narrative, he goes on to explore his own ambiguities of feeling, the irony of the 'play within a play', and to comment on the whole situation . . . 'our words were put into our mouths not because of what we felt but because of the standard procedure of television.' A final irony which he observes is the policeman who (by association) makes his grandmother seem like 'some drunken criminal' as he walks her 'slowly away into the yellow-black night.'

He shows the same sureness in using a variety of sentence patterns as with the pattern of the whole story; and the detail makes significant those things which are at the heart of the story—the

uneventful family setting, his grandmother's physical appearance, her glasses, her face when she is crying, his own ambiguous feelings, the questions he asks himself.

Some of the other pieces of writing also attempted to explore an experience on an intellectual as well as an emotional level, but the questions they asked and the comments they made were never so much part of the whole pattern of the situation as William's are. We found that the whole shape, the moments of tension, the detail, sentence structure and vocabulary all revealed a greater total coherence than we found in any of the others.

28. CHRISTOPHER *Vive la France!* (A)

Whereas William's piece was similar in theme and treatment to many of the others, Christopher's is differently imagined. He makes no explicit comment, asks no questions—apparently—just tells a story, a monstrous story which hovers, sometimes uncertainly, between being funny and being appalling. He tells the story by means of three sets of voices; the narrator who indirectly expresses the agonizing fears and rages of the master; the successive choruses of the boys; and the accompanying 'voices' of the musical instruments. These sets of voices are not linked syntactically; they come in one after the other like elements in an infernal orchestra, and the events end with the triple crescendo of the boys shrieking in the classroom, the pursuing trombones and oboes, and the death of the boy.

But it is not a tragedy; it is a bad dream, and the voices transpose themselves so that the 'chorus' of the midgets in national health glasses seems like appalling music, while the trombones that 'hammer hysterically at the door' and the oboe that creeps underneath it seem like appalling boys.

This is a bold and skilful piece of writing. Perhaps it is more an exploration of language and what it can do than it is an exploration of thought and feeling. It does, after all, represent a kind of stereotype view of master and boys, but it is near enough to many a real situation for the fantasy to strike home. It draws on a wide range of linguistic resources. The details are highly significant and powerful in their ambiguity: the car 'shudders', but so does the master; the trombones 'tramp'—on whom? one asks—the 'heartbroken oboe crawls' . . . and so on. The story is really developed through the actions of the 'weird symphony'; . . . 'the violins picked . . . like an annoying tap, dripping irregularly . . . the whole ground seemed to be a sheet of water . . . he grabbed the boy by the neck and shoved his head under the water.' The weird symphony had found where

it was going. He also uses dialogue from time to time in just as bold a way:

'P.3, sir, P.3, sir, sir, P.3, P.3, P.3, sir. sir.' and:

'A Hungarian Folksong, Folkson, sir, Hungarian, P.3, sir.'

Such transpositions and permutations of vocabulary elements, as well as the interweaving of the threads that carry the story make a highly coherent pattern, and reveal a level of language ability at which he can break established patterns deliberately to create the effect he wants; in short he can innovate in language.

It is likely that readers may disagree as to the relative merit of this piece and William's (No. 27). It is suggested that both these pieces are of a quality which makes the question of which is better irrelevant. Assessment has done its work in putting them at the top end of the scale of fifteen-year-old writing, and preferences for one over the other are a matter of personal choice.

These, and others that we have included, represent the kind of personal writing that one would wish to see in course work as part of the assessment of candidates at this level.

BOOK REFERENCES

BERNSTEIN, B.: *Social Structure, Language and Learning* (Education Research, Vol. III No. 3, June, 1961).

BROWN, ROGER: *Words and Things* (Chatto, 1958).

HALLIDAY, MCINTOSH and STREVENS: *The Linguistic Sciences and Language Teaching* (Longmans, 1964).

HARDING, D. W.: *Experience into Words* (Chatto, 1964).

MCKELLER, P.: *Imagination and Thinking* (Cohen & West, 1957).